

Latin America and Caribbean Panel

Support

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CHAIRMAN PERKINS: Our first speaker on the Latin America Panel is Dr. Luis Garibay, President of IAUP, member of ICED's Board of Trustees and Rector of the Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara which celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary only a few years ago. He is also Honorary President of the Kyoto University of Foreign Studies and is a recipient of the Decoration of the Sacred Treasure of Japan. Dr. Garibay will talk about the "support" by the corporate, business world of higher education in Mexico. Dr. Luis Garibay.

DR. GARIBAY: Thank you, Dr. Perkins.

Let us begin by looking at some aspects of the present state of Latin American universities to create new knowledge, to solve problems, design new devices, products, goods and ideas. In relation to research and development (R&D), we ought to recognize that a good part of this effort is realized outside of the Latin American universities. There are not many universities in each nation that are equipped to conduct R&D with a direct impact on the market.

According to data from UNESCO, at the beginning of this decade the less developed nations of the world invested only 6.2 percent of the total world invest in R&D. Compared to 1970, this figure represented an increase of more than 100 percent, at the cost of great sacrifices and conflict with funds available for other urgent human social necessities including public services, transportation, housing, education, health, energy and nutrition.

The nations of the region, burdened by external debts that impose upon them severe budgetary restrictions, cannot in the present decade safeguard R&D and higher education from these financial limitations.

Latin America and the Caribbean invest 1.8 percent of the world total R&D investment. In real numbers, however, it can be reported that the

percentages invested in R&D by the developed countries are equivalent in many cases to the complete national budgets of the less developed countries.

At the national level, the participation of industry in the financing activities of R&D in Mexico is as a general rule minor and symbolic. According to a 1987 UNESCO report, industrial participation in financing research and experimental development is within the range of 0.9 percent in Mexico, from 0.1 percent in Colombia to 19.8 percent in Brazil.

A Distant Relationship

In Mexico, the three intervening sectors for economic progress -- industry, university and state -- are not yet adequately linked together. There has been an undesirable separation between the university and the productive sector, especially industry.

In the public sector, where policies are formulated and the legal framework of the rules of the game are established, the lack of continuity of policies, bureaucratization and other endemic ills, when coupled with the insufficient stimuli to the productive sector and immoderate growth of the state, have led to a lack of confidence and stability. There are, however, some encouraging signs in our region of a desire to restructure the state to make it more responsible and efficient.

Many Latin American industries, which are for the most part small or medium sized and which grew in the shelter of protectionist policies and restricted importations, are not sufficiently prepared to confront the demands of international competition where quality and cost are combined. For its part, the university has concentrated on satisfying the demands of quantitative expansion to the detriment of quality. In this scenario the islands of excellence stand out clearly in every country and every region.

Tendencies of Higher Education in Mexico

The Mexican universities' lack of focus on economic production has historic and cultural roots dating back to the Colonial era, when the university served a missionary-evangelical-theological mission designed to convert and train the native Indian population. As the Creole and Mestizo populations

increased, they demanded a revision of the studies offered and subsequently received an education of the same quality as that of the European universities of this epoch, oriented toward the liberal professions and public service. After Independence, the university was caught in a struggle between liberal and conservative groups, which closed and reopened the institution according to whether or not they were in agreement with the ideas it expressed. At the beginning of the twentieth century neither industry nor university was concerned with establishing mutual links, and the university continued in the mold of the Napoleonic university of the state.

The Advent of Private Universities in Mexico

The birth of the first private universities in the 1930s and 1940s brought about closer university relations with differentiated sectors of society distinct from the state, among those industry. Private universities not dependent upon entrepreneurial groups were led by the twin dynamics of necessity and circumstance to search for a new relationship with the industries that employed their graduates. We also found entrepreneurial groups which established their own institutions of higher education, following the model of North American universities, with the object of preparing a more relevant type of professional. All of these new universities hoped to train the kind of professionals required by industry.

Modernization of the University

The modernization of the university, begun by private institutions in Latin America in the mid-1960s, included elements which encouraged an increased and better relationship between university and industry. Among these pioneer efforts at the regional level, the Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara, together with the Organization of American States, organized a seminar to approach this problem in depth. Out of this came a determination to seek a close and fruitful relation between university and industry, to strengthen the awareness of such ties, and to decide which instruments and mechanisms were needed to make the relationship operative.

A number of innovations were proposed and incorporated into a new

university structure, designed to equip the university to meet its new mission. Among these innovations were the inclusion of business leaders in collegiate consulting bodies (the Council of Directors), the organization of its graduates into an alumni association, and the creation of an administrative unit to raise funds, handle public relations and maintain satisfactory communication with corporations and anticipate corporate needs. Within the academic structure itself, the university created institutes of service to the productive sector, especially to small and medium sized enterprises, to which support was offered in research, quality control and the resolution of specific problems. The enrollment of large numbers of persons from industry is reflected in the expansion of the university's graduate programs over the past decade, especially at the level of the master's degree. The Division of Continuing Education has also served to help the personnel of private enterprise recycle their abilities and knowledge.

The innovations instituted by the Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara in the 1960s have been adopted by various universities of the region, but there are still many that isolate themselves from the productive sector. We see encouraging signs, however, that the decade of the 1990s will see an increase in the tendency to further develop a closer university-industry relationship. For example, the public universities, influenced by changes operating in the political and economic sectors, have also initiated policies of service to industry through technological innovation, and they too have organized their alumni into associations supporting the academic activities of their various universities. The determination of the government to strengthen the state-university-industry triangle is promising in its efforts to achieve a greater impact by the scientific-technological sector, represented here by the university, on the economic production of the nation.

New Forms of Cooperation and Support

If there is a true desire to break with the "distant isolation" and to build bridges over the gaps and mutual misunderstandings, a new era in state-university-industry relations is indispensable. The dimension of this

relationship goes beyond the mere national level when the corporations are transnational. These large foreign enterprises invest outside of their own frontiers, creating employment and generating profits and benefits. Nevertheless, their activities in support of the local universities is only cosmetic when compared with the monies they channel into the universities and research centers in their respective countries.

To indulge the free play of imagination and wishful thinking, it would be desirable if the industrialized nations which channel funds for the development of the nations of the South would consider reorienting this aid in such a manner as to make its impact more durable. The truth is that the universities of Latin American and the Caribbean urgently require financial, scientific and technological support to enable them to overcome their present crisis. Such aid to networks of universities oriented to development could have an important impact on the future improvement of state-university-industry relationships.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Garibay. Your timing was, as we say, exactly on target.